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Superintendent’s Corner

Our kids

DR. JOSEPH M. SAWYER  
SUPERINTENDENT

The following is adapted from remarks I made at the Shrewsbury Youth & Family Services annual meeting in October 2016.

As I’m sure you have, I’ve been thinking a great deal recently about how community life has been evolving in the United States, and I think it’s clear that we as a country are experiencing a time where there is a great deal of anger, divisiveness, mistrust, and coarseness. I am not a sociologist, nor an economist, nor a political scientist, but as an educator I am very concerned about our current state of affairs nationally, and what this ultimately means for our town of Shrewsbury.

Last spring, I had the opportunity to hear Robert Putnam, the Harvard sociologist and author who has done extensive studies of American society and who, in his recent book *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*, makes the case that the sharply growing gap between the wellbeing of children

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Pictured above are Student Innovation Team members Lauren Baldino and Chasia Molina. See “Global Connections” story on page 7.

“Education is not preparation for life: Education is life itself.”

~ JOHN DEWEY (1859 - 1952) ~



Pictured above are Adrija Duttaroy, Sarah Backstrom, Iynelle Gyimah-Affram, Haley Erickson, Shreya Venkayala, Anusha Patil, Tejas Balaji, John Grenier and Danté Basquiat who are participating in the Middle School Robotics pilot program on Mondays and Tuesdays at Sherwood Middle School. See “Coding at Sherwood” story on page 5.

Funding our children’s education

MS. SANDRA FRYC  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE CHAIR

Shrewsbury is a high performing school district. Students receive an outstanding education and the taxpayers of our town receive an excellent return on their investment in education services. This is my ninth year as a School Committee member and I have seen the focus on the school budget grow; not only in the amount of time we spend working on it, but also the level of detail and attention it requires. The “budget season” is a thing of the past. In our district, the school budget is something the School Committee assesses on a year round basis. Frankly, our district does more with less and I do not see the budget pressures subsiding in the near or distant future.

To some, the School Committee’s budget concerns are just an annual complaint. “Why can’t they provide educational services without needing additional funding?” The

answer is simple. Education is expensive. Cost drivers such as inflation, providing adequate resources to meet all legal mandates required of the school district, and often unpredictable increases in special education costs create issues that must be addressed during the annual budget process. The core of our school budget funding comes from town-generated dollars, as well as grants and fees. The rest is from the state, but the level of support from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is below the current rate of inflation, so the task of sustaining educational services is basically impossible in light of increased costs.

The appropriated School Department fiscal year 2017 school budget was an increase of 3.34% over fiscal year 2016. This budget maintains all academic programs with some minor modifications (including a small number of positions cut), maintains class size, and raised revenue through a limited adoption of school choice and some fee increases. It

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Superintendent’s Corner

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from wealthy families vs. poor families is, and will be, the most important issue facing our country now and in the coming decades. His argument lays out the stark differences created by increased segregation of social classes in America, from where people live, to the quality of education, to whether parents are married. He illustrates how family and social bonds are fraying within the lower socioeconomic classes, and how children from lower income families are living not just in a marginally different environment, but essentially in a different universe than their more affluent peers. The contrast he draws from his own upbringing in a small Ohio town in the 1950s, compared to what currently exists in that community, is striking, and he concludes that a significant cultural change has occurred. He says that when he grew up, in his town the phrase “our kids” referred to the entire community’s children. He suggests that now “our kids” is more likely to mean “my own kids and my friends’ kids,” and that many Americans have a narrower and more selfish perspective when it comes to the wellbeing of the next generation.

While Putnam’s view of a more equitable playing field in the past may be a bit narrow, as opportunities were certainly different than they are today if you were female or a minority back in the 1950s, I think his larger point is on target relative to the extreme differences between social classes in today’s America, and how this is affecting children’s chances at upward mobility during their lifetime. Interestingly, despite his findings, Putnam is an optimist who sees parallels between where we are now and where we were as a country in the late 19th and early 20th centuries,

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The non-profit Shrewsbury School Journal is published three times a year and reaches every household in the diverse and growing town of Shrewsbury. It is published by the central office of the Shrewsbury Public Schools with the help and expertise of many individuals. The mission of the Shrewsbury School Journal is to provide an accurate source of information about our school system and the town in which we live. We hope to foster a community of continuous learners.

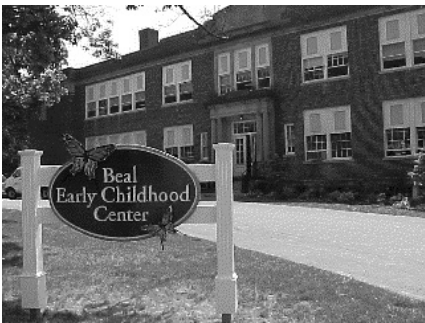
**Dr. Joseph M. Sawyer**  
Superintendent

**Elizabeth McCollum**  
Project Coordinator

**Tara Gauthier**  
Designer

Beal project status

PATRICK COLLINS  
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR  
FINANCE AND OPERATIONS  
BEAL EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER  
BUILDING COMMITTEE MEMBER



The Beal Early Childhood Center Project is making steady progress. In April 2015 the Board of Selectmen and School Committee unanimously voted to submit a Statement of Interest Application to the Massachusetts School Building Authority [MSBA] seeking financial assistance in solving our facility and space problem associated with the Beal School and elementary population as a whole. In the 2015 application cycle, MSBA received 97 applications and approved 26 projects based upon most urgent need, including the Beal Early Childhood Center.

In April 2016, with approval of the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting, a Building Committee was formed and began the work as required by MSBA. The MSBA building process includes eight distinct modules and each community who is seeking their financial assistance must complete each module and its respective requirements in sequence. The Beal Project is currently at the end of *Module One: Eligibility Period*. The chart below depicts the required deliverables and associated deadlines. As one can see, we have successfully met

DELIVERABLE	DEADLINE	STATUS
Initial Compliance Certification	May 13, 2016	May 13, 2016
School Building Committee	June 13, 2016	June 13, 2016
Educational Profile Questionnaire	July 12, 2016	July 12, 2016
Online Enrollment Projection	July 12, 2016	July 12, 2016
Enrollment/Certification Executed	October 11, 2016	October 11, 2016
Maintenance and Capital Planning Information	October 11, 2016	October 11, 2016
Local Vote Authorization	No Later than January 9, 2017	December 5, 2016 Special Town Meeting
Feasability Study Agreement (with MSBA)	January 9, 2017	MSBA Board Meeting is 2/15/2017

nearly all milestones and have only one to go in order to progress to *Module Two: Forming the Project Team*.

The next critical action for advancement into Module Two is the appropriation of funding for a required Feasibility Study. Based upon the Enrollment Certification by MSBA our community will be required to study, at a minimum; the option of adding to or replacing Beal with a 750 seat kindergarten through grade one school at the existing or a new site, and the option of adding to or replacing Beal with a 790 seat kindergarten through grade four school at the existing or a new site. Additionally, the Building Committee is interested in exploring capacity and expansion possibilities at our existing elementary schools to meet the projected enrollment ten years from now.

Many have asked: “So, what’s the solution? or “Where would a new school go?” or “How much will this cost?”

All of these are reasonable

questions and it is the purpose of the Feasibility Study Phase and subsequent modules to lead us to these answers. The MSBA is interested in assisting us and investing their share of funding in a long-term, educationally sound, and cost-effective solution. This is a thorough and deliberate process that requires the expert advice and information of many industry professionals who would be hired as part of the Feasibility Study Phase.

On December 5, 2016 a Special Town Meeting will convene and be asked to appropriate \$1.2 million for the Feasibility Study Process. The MSBA will reimburse 50.16% of the cost so the net cost to the town, if funds were fully expended, would be approximately \$600,000 after MSBA reimbursement.

Our community has demonstrated good stewardship of its capital assets and it is now time to address the 1922 Beal School and our long-term space needs at the elementary level. We are excited about our future and grateful to be receiving the financial and professional support of the MSBA.

SFCU donates to the Colonial Fund

MICHELLE BISCOTTI &  
KATHLEEN KEOHANE  
COORDINATORS OF VOLUNTEER  
ACTIVITIES & DEVELOPMENT

Shrewsbury Federal Credit Union (SFCU) is once again joining the Shrewsbury Public Schools Colonial Fund as our Innovation Partner. SFCU is generously donating \$5,000 to the Colonial Fund and will match individual donations up to another \$5,000.

SFCU provided this same matching opportunity to our community last year and Shrewsbury did not disappoint! Together we raised \$23,000 during the matching campaign, and a grand total of \$83,100 last year for the Colonial Fund to support high impact innovations across our school district. We hope to do even more this year.

“We are so pleased that Shrewsbury Federal Credit Union is once again partnering with us as our Innovation Partner

for the Colonial Fund,” said Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools. “These are investments that we wouldn’t be able make without this funding stream and the innovative work that it has yielded is improving education for kids in Shrewsbury. We are very appreciative of their generosity.”

The Colonial Fund was established in 2013 to bring high impact innovations to our schools that will further prepare our students for the demands of today’s colleges and careers in the 21st century global marketplace.

Over the past three years, Colonial Fund dollars helped fund the 4 th grade digital classroom pilot, the purchase of interactive whiteboards in our elementary schools and enhancements to the WiFi network at Shrewsbury High School to allow all students and staff to use iPads. Last year, the Colonial Fund also sponsored the film screening of *Most Likely To Succeed* and subsequent panel discussion as well as an

evening with noted speaker Will Richardson.

Our goal is to grow the Colonial Fund into a permanent fund that will enhance the education of Shrewsbury students for years to come. With your help, we can make this goal a reality. Shrewsbury Federal Credit Union’s generous offer to match all individual donations up to \$5,000 will double the impact of your gift and could bring an additional \$15,000 to fund innovative projects in our schools.

For more information about the Colonial Fund and the projects it supports, go to: <http://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/future>. There you will also find links to the Colonial Fund on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

For more information about Shrewsbury Federal Credit Union and the services they provide in our community go to <http://shrewsburycu.com>



# Responding and innovating

MARY BETH BANIOS  
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR  
CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

### Overview

In the fall of 2015, the Shrewsbury Public School District convened an Innovation in Learning Study Group in response to the significant changes that have occurred around access to information, interconnectedness, and the new skill sets being sought after in the work environment.

This group was tasked with visiting a variety of different learning environments that have been recognized for their innovative practices and for effectively preparing their students for the demands of the 21st century. Funding for these visits was provided by a federal grant focused on teacher professional development. In conjunction with the visits, the group also read the book, *Most Likely to Succeed*, written by Tony Wagner and Ted Dintersmith. This book explores the belief that the basic structures of our education system, which were developed in the late 1800s, are no longer appropriate for contemporary learners.

The team visited five schools, publically recognized for their innovation, during the 2016 winter-spring time frame. To view blog posts of each of the visits please go to: [spsinnovationinlearning.wordpress.com](http://spsinnovationinlearning.wordpress.com)

After each visit, and then at the end of all visits, the study group members met to reflect upon, summarize, and synthesize what had been learned from visiting these innovative schools. Below is a description of the six themes that emerged across these sites.

### Common Vision

Whenever change is made, and especially when it impacts long and widely-held beliefs, it is imperative to garner support of all stakeholders. Part of the common vision needs to be based on an honest assessment around how our traditional educational system and success markers may be out of alignment with the realities of our digital, interconnected economy. An understanding of the alignment issue helps to avoid the perspective that innovation efforts in high performing schools are trying to fix something that isn't broken.

### Sense of Community

Incorporated into the vision of each of these schools was the sense that everyone was a part of the team. The members simultaneously appreciated both individuality and community. They made it clear that every individual had something of value to offer to the group. No captain or passengers, everyone had a sense of agency and a sense of responsibility. Families were strongly connected to the classroom and had multiple opportunities to view student exhibitions of work. Community partnerships were fostered, cultivated, actively pursued and supported in order to provide real-world experience and off-site learning opportunities for students. These connections allowed students to feel a part of the community while simultaneously providing the community with the opportunity to feel connected to the students and the school.

### Inclusion and Equity

Overall there was a clear trend across these schools to fade out tracking structures, such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses and honors courses, in favor of more heterogeneous groups. One model gave all students the ability to “opt in” to the honors pathway within a specific course/class.

The semester based Rivers and Revolution Program had a class comprised of high level honors students to intensive special needs students. Students across the special education spectrum were incorporated into the learning environments at High Tech High, King Middle School, Rivers and Revolutions, Worcester Technical High School. The level to which special needs students were integrated into project based learning experiences did vary between schools.

### Growth Mindset, Empathy, and Risk Taking

Across these innovative schools, classrooms were observed that balanced a focus on rigorous academics, social-emotional well-being, and mindset work. Cultivating growth mindset (the belief that one can get better through effective effort) was taught both explicitly and consistently across the school setting. This mindset was fundamental to student success and school culture. An emphasis on developing a sense of empathy was another mindset that was integrated into a number of sites as well. The idea of “kind, helpful, and specific critique,” which requires a sense of empathy towards the person receiving

feedback, was promoted at King Middle School and High Tech High. Olin College of Engineering focused on empathizing with the user prior to beginning the design and construction process. Empathy as an integral part of design was also observed at High Tech High and Beaver Country Day School. Finally, positive messaging around risk taking and learning from mistakes was a predominant theme across the majority of settings. Failure was expected, and viewed as an integral part of the learning process.

### Project-Based Learning

All students in the schools we visited participated in authentic, interdisciplinary units of study that incorporated a variety of targeted content, but also allowed for a great deal of student voice and choice. Students we met demonstrated a high level of investment and engagement in their work. They could easily articulate the real world relevance of their work. Teachers embraced their role as co-learner and coach. They shared their enthusiasm for trying new things and demonstrated that failure is a natural part of the learning process. These schools made strategic decisions about curriculum content; there was an acceptance that curriculum standards needed to be streamlined in order to accommodate deeper learning activities. It should be noted that none of the schools used a project-based learning approach 100% of the time. In all locations, traditional lectures, quizzes, and labs were utilized. In these environments, however, students’ work was ultimately assessed by authentic public audiences.

### School Structures

Schools can be constrained by overly complex scheduling that can inadvertently impact the quality of the student experience. At the sites we visited, schedules were designed to support the mission and vision of the school; this meant breaking from traditional educational schedules. Some of the observed structures were:

- A school within a school model
- Interdisciplinary projects and courses
- Multi-age classes
- Month long internships for all juniors
- In-depth teacher collaboration time prior to beginning of school
- Alternating academic learning environments and “hands-on” project based learning environments

## Superintendent's Corner

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where many of the problems of the so-called Gilded Age are present today: the greatest gap between rich and poor (until now); very high rates of immigration; and significant political alienation. Putnam asserts that these issues were addressed effectively by what he calls the greatest public policy decision in the history of our country: the implementation and widespread adoption of the American public high school. This investment, which was significant at the time, raised productivity so much that Putnam says it was responsible for a huge amount of the economic growth in the 20th century; it helped level the playing field between social classes; and it was an engine of upward mobility that was a manifestation of local communities providing opportunities for their youth, regardless of their socioeconomic background. He also reminded those of us in the audience that this was a bottom-up solution that played out in local communities, not a national mandate from Washington D.C. Providing educational opportunity to all the community's young people through access to public education turned out to be an excellent investment with long-lasting positive effects.

Public education is what made the American dream achievable for millions, including my parents, my siblings, and me. Now, in 2016, the expectations for what a public education should provide to students have multiplied and become more complex, and the world our students will enter after they graduate is not only complicated but changing rapidly. Our school district is working very hard to figure out how to best prepare our students to be successful in the future, and I am optimistic that we will find ways to equip them with the skills and knowledge they will need to succeed. Ultimately, it will take the entire community to support and sustain this effort, in the spirit of providing all of “our kids” the opportunity to achieve their American dreams.





**Education**  
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is important to note that this budget did not include any new academic programs or new classroom teaching positions, and reflected modest employee compensation adjustments based on actual and projected contractual agreements.

The Proposition 2 ½ override in 2014 provided much needed revenue to the School Department as it added funding in order to stem the erosion of educational services. At the time, it was neither implied nor stated to be the solution to education funding. Shrewsbury, like most other cities and towns in Massachusetts, continues to deal with the structural issue of funding public education. If Shrewsbury Public Schools were a private corporation and experienced the current level of results, it would most likely generate significant profits. Public education is different because it costs money to provide services to over 6,000 students each day, but our results are not determined in the form of monetary profits. Shrewsbury’s results are determined by student achievement, which is supported by state, regional and national recognition for academic strengths.

How do we continue to provide educational services within the budget constraints? I wish the answer were simple. The School Committee recently approved our priorities and guidelines for fiscal year 2018 budget development. This document can be viewed on the Shrewsbury Public Schools website under budget materials. It is our roadmap as we formulate our budget recommendation. As this school year got underway, three areas of increased concern arose: the ability to respond to the education needs of the increase in English Language Learner students; the need to respond to several students with special needs who moved into the community; and the level of administrative support needed to adequately serve our growing student population and the ever-increasing compliance and reporting requirements of federal and state governments.

The desire and passion of our school administration and educators to continually do outstanding work in the classroom to support and elevate student learning is evident every day. Unfortunately, upcoming annual budget preparation and concerns about adequate funding just to continue to provide today’s services remains a constant and increasing concern. The School Committee is currently working on a five-year fiscal projection and will provide a report estimating the potential budget gaps based on historical assumptions. Our plan is to complete this work and present it as part of our early budget discussions.

We have much to be proud of as a school district, but the ability to provide the same level of education

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# Welcome to our new staff members

BARBARA MALONE  
*DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES*

The district has successfully completed the new hire process to fill key positions within the district. These positions were hired to replace a portion of the educators who had retired or resigned, as well as replace paraprofessional positions open due to student needs, resignations, or retirements, and two other positions open due to resignation or retirement. In addition to these appointments three educators have transferred to different positions/schools within the district for the 2016-2017 school year. We have appointed 26.6 staff to professional positions (not including internal transfers/promotions), and we had appointed 41 paraprofessional positions (including regular and substitute positions) as of September 7, one executive administrative assistant and one secretary. We also continue to fill positions available due to maternity/paternity leaves or personal illness, and have continued to fill paraprofessional positions due to student needs, resignations, and leaves of absence.

**Professional Staff**

Included among the 26.6 professional staff hired is the new Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services for the District, Margaret (Meg) Belsito, who is replacing the previous director, who resigned to take a position with another district. The 26.6 professional staff includes appointments to full year long term substitute positions, with a total of 15 positions hired at the preschool or elementary level, 6 positions at the middle level, and 4.6 positions at the high school level. In addition, Erin Kendrick, formerly a third grade teacher at Coolidge, has become the new Instructional Coach/Curriculum Coordinator for that school, and is included in the total of our three internal transfers.

The teacher selection process in Shrewsbury is rigorous, and through the hard work of our District Leadership Team, as well as educators, parents and students who volunteered to be part of selection meetings or demonstration lessons, we have adhered to our high standards. The process includes interviews with principals, department directors, curriculum coordinators/instructional coaches, teachers, parents, and central office administrators. At the high school level, students also serve on the interview teams.

All teaching positions require a demonstration lesson in the classroom, which is a key ingredient in the selection and hiring process. All candidates recommended for hire are also

required to interview with the Director of Human Resources and the Superintendent of Schools as the final step in the selection process, where our mission and core values are discussed individually with each finalist. A thorough reference check is conducted on each new hire, including the “CORI” (Massachusetts background check) and the “SAFIS” (national fingerprint-based FBI background check).

We continue to use www.schoolspring.com as our primary sourcing tool, which netted 1,717 applicants to our professional positions. This means that 1.46% of those who applied to our professional positions ultimately received a position with us this year. Last year that percentage was 3.8% and the year before, just under 2%.

Principals, directors, and selection committees reviewed these application packets. Some applicants were selected for phone interviews, and then an even smaller number invited for face-to-face interviews and their teaching demonstration lessons. References were contacted, which resulted in the finalist recommendations.

Our new professional educators completed two days of orientation on August 25 and August 26 and each has had a mentor assigned for the upcoming year.

**Paraprofessional Staff**

As of September 7, 2016 we had hired 41 paraprofessional positions. These positions netted 662 applicants. This means we hired 6.19% of those who applied to our paraprofessional positions, compared to 4.3% last year, and 3.3% the year before. These applicants also underwent a rigorous selection process, which included applicant packet screening, phone and face to face interviews, reference checks, the CORI background checks, and the national SAFIS (FBI fingerprint-based background check).

**New Hiring-Administrative Support**

As of September 7 we had hired two administrative support positions, one to replace a retiring special education secretary at the high school, and one to replace the Superintendent’s executive assistant.

**New District Leaders**

Margaret (Meg) L. Belsito, *Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services, District*  
Master of Education, concentration in Curriculum and Design, Lesley University  
Bachelor of Science in Elementary and Special Education, Providence College

Erin Kendrick, *Instructional Coach/Curriculum Coordinator*, Coolidge Elementary School (internal transfer)  
Master of Elementary Education, Lesley University  
Bachelor of Arts in English, Wagner College

**Transferring Educators**

Beth E. McNerny, from Coolidge Elementary School to the Beal Early Childhood Center (*Kindergarten*)

Heather Leger, from Sherwood Middle School to Shrewsbury High School (*French*)

**New Educators**

Shrewsbury High School:  
Teresa Canney, *Biology*  
Bachelor of Science in Biology, Worcester State University

Samantha Doolittle, *English*  
Master of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education  
Bachelor of English and Theatre, Mount Holyoke College

Andrew Giese, *Chemistry*  
Master of Public Health, University of Massachusetts at Amherst  
Bachelor of Arts in Biology and Chemistry, Assumption College

Thomas MacRae, *Physics*  
Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering, WPI  
Bachelor of Science in Physics and Astronomy, University of Massachusetts at Amherst

Cheryl Nelson, *Mathematics*  
Master of Business Administration, Boston College  
Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering, University of Miami

Oak Middle School:  
Angela Grove, *Social Studies*  
Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and History, Randolph-Macon Women’s College

Anne Marie Lockwood, *Mathematics*  
Master of Business Administration, Nichols College  
Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, Boston University

Kyle Wells, *English Language Arts*  
Master of Education in English, University of Massachusetts at Amherst  
Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Secondary Education, University of Massachusetts at Amherst

Sherwood Middle School:  
Awa Diop, *French*  
Master of Arts in French Language, Literature and Culture, Syracuse University  
Bachelor of Arts in French Language, Literature and Culture, Syracuse University

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# Coding at Sherwood

KAREN ISAACSON  
OFFICE OF EXTENDED LEARNING

If you stop by the Sherwood Middle School on a Monday or Tuesday afternoon, you're likely to see a dozen bright blue orbs with flashing lights rolling across the floor. These colorful spheres are program-mable robots named Dash and Dot, and the students creating the code are part of the extended day program's robotics club. The club is led by Tara Gauthier, Instruc-tional Technology Specialist at Shrewsbury High, and has 38 members. Students meet weekly to learn the basics of computer coding in a fun and hands-on way. Ms. Gauthier saw these robots in action at a conference last year and knew they'd be a great fit for the Shrewsbury Schools. By collaborating with the Office of Extended Learning, the district was able to purchase 10 classroom packs and start a pilot program after school at Sherwood this fall.

The robots are made by the Wonder Workshop Company, and are designed to introduce coding in a fun, interactive way to students in grades K-6. Dash can be programmed to navigate objects, respond to voice, dance, sing, launch balls, play the xylophone, and interact with Dot. Interac-tive apps, installed on district iPads, use drag and drop "blocks" of code, which connect to create a sequence of commands for the robots to follow. The Sherwood club attracted both experienced and first-time coders, and all the students agree that the pro-gram has been fun and easy to learn. Students work in pairs to solve the challenges set forth by Ms. Gauthier



Pictured above are Danté Basquiat, Tejas Balaji and John Grenier showing off the robots that they program each week..



Pictured above are Taran Udayabanu and Jonathan Ostromecky. discussing the program for their robot.

and each week's lesson builds upon the last. In programming the robots to move in specific ways, students are applying their knowledge of geometry and angles. As they test their programs they are able to quickly discover their errors and make adjustments. The hands-on programs allow stu-dents to make connections be-tween the abstract and concrete and see the relevance of the skills they have learned. Ms. Gauthier reports that her stu-dents have been very engaged in the process and are success-fully collaborating with their partners to create increasingly complex programs.

Shawna Powers, Director of Instructional Technology and Media Services, is enthusiastic about the project.

"Learning to code benefits all students because it teaches computational thinking and problem solving, and increasingly the job market requires these types of skills." Programming the robots promotes a way of learning in which students come up with a solution, test it right away, determine what went wrong, and try it again. It's a series of small steps that slowly work toward an end

result. It requires persistence, and Ms. Powers believes, "it's important to embrace failure as part of the learning process. It's a good metaphor for all of life." The design of the robots is appealing to students of all ages, and girls and boys are equally interested in participating. Ms. Powers reports that by high school, the majority of the students in her computer classes are male, a trend she'd like to reverse. "By engaging girls at a younger age we are more likely to keep them interested going forward."

The pilot program at Sherwood will wrap up before Thanksgiving, and Ms. Gauthier is already making plans to extend the learning opportunities across the district. Classes will continue after school at Sherwood in January, and will be offered to elementary students during school vacation camps and summer enrichment. Several district teachers have also expressed interest in using the robots as part of their classroom mathematics curriculum. We have only just begun to consider the many ways this equipment can be used to enhance learning through technology, and we look forward to providing many more students first hand experiences with coding.

## Education

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services is deeply troubling in light of limited funding and increased demands. As we move into our formal budget work for fiscal year 2018 we know the answer to one question: the budget process will be complicated, confusing, and predictable.

## Innovating

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- Deeper learning of one special subject each year as opposed to offering all special subjects every year

### Next Steps

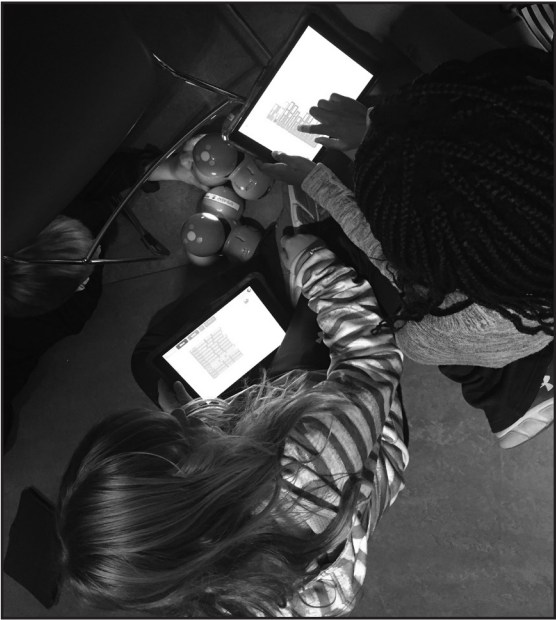
The Innovation in Learning Study Group recently completed an in-district site visit aimed at capturing the innovative learning experiences that are already occurring in the Shrewsbury Public Schools and will be reporting out highlights from the visit by the end of the calendar year.

A working group focused on developing a Portrait of a Shrewsbury Graduate will begin its work in January 2017. A portrait of a graduate defines what our community believes is most critical for our students to know and be able to do by the time they graduate from Shrewsbury High School. Having this profile well articulated will help inform the district's next set of strategic priorities and the instructional decision making across our schools.

Please stay tuned as the Shrewsbury community continues its conversation on how its schools can best prepare students for a rapidly changing, interconnected and digital world.

*There are very few schools that purposefully try to create lines and connections between different fields. The way most high schools are set up, you're in history class, and then the bell rings; then you go to science class, and then the bell rings.*  
~ Michael Goodwin,  
Founder of Rivers and Revolution Program

*If parents want to give their children a gift, the best thing they can do is to teach their children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort, and keep on learning. That way, their children don't have to be slaves of praise. They will have a lifelong way to build and repair their own confidence.*  
~ Carol S. Dweck



Pictured above are Sarah Backstrom and Iynelle Gyimah-Affram, working on the code for their robot.



**New staff**  
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Jillian O’Connor, *Mathematics/Science*  
Master of Education, University of  
Massachusetts at Amherst  
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology,  
University of Massachusetts at Amherst

Bethany Slade, *Spanish*  
Bachelor of English and Painting,  
Boston University

All Elementary Schools:  
Pamela Santilli, *Media Specialist*  
Master of Education in Library Sciences,  
Cambridge College  
Bachelor of Science in Elementary  
Education, Worcester State University

Beal Early Childhood Center:  
Michelle Neddo, *Kindergarten*  
Master of Education in Curriculum and  
Instruction, Literacy, Lesley University  
Bachelor of Science in Psychology,  
Framingham State University

Coolidge Elementary School:  
Kayla Cotter, *Second Grade*  
Master of Special Education (Moderate  
Disabilities), Lesley University  
Bachelor of Arts in Elementary  
Education, Roger Williams University

Peter Fairbrother, *Third Grade*  
Bachelor of Arts in Elementary and  
Special Education, Providence College

Katherine Mills, *Kindergarten*  
Master’s of Early Childhood Education,  
Worcester State University  
Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood  
Education, Plymouth State University

Leah Terrasi, *First Grade*  
Bachelor of Arts in Elementary  
Education, Worcester State University

Floral Street Elementary School:  
Meaghan McCarthy, *First Grade*  
Bachelor of Arts in Elementary  
Education, Stonehill College

Joshua Nichols, *English Language  
Education*  
Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, Central  
Christian College of Kansas

Jessica Willand, *Speech Language  
Pathologist*  
Master of Science in Speech Language  
Pathology, Worcester State University  
Bachelor of Science in Communication  
Sciences and Disorders, Worcester State  
University

Sarah Wilander, *English Language  
Education*  
Bachelor of Arts in Communication  
Disorders and Spanish, University of  
Rhode Island

Paton Elementary School:  
Angela Bergeron, *Second Grade*  
Master of Special Education (Moderate  
Disabilities), Lesley University  
Bachelor of Arts in Elementary  
Education, Keene State College

Jenna Violette, *First Grade*  
Bachelor of Arts in Early Grades  
Education (PreK-4), West Chester  
University of Pennsylvania

Jenny A. White, *First Grade*  
Bachelor of Arts in Elementary  
Education, Psychology, Saint Michael’s  
College

CONTINUED, see page 7

# #GivingTuesday

MICHELLE BISCOTTI &  
KATHLEEN KEOHANE  
COORDINATORS OF VOLUNTEER  
ACTIVITIES & DEVELOPMENT

On November 29, we kicked off our Annual Campaign for the Shrewsbury Public Schools Colonial Fund, on #GivingTuesday. #GivingTuesday is a world-wide event, held at the start of the busy gift-giving season, to remind us of opportunities for charitable giving as well.

For the third year, we have joined the #GivingTuesday movement, along with thousands of other individuals, communities and organizations around the world to celebrate and encourage philanthropy.

While we recognize that you have many options available to you for year-end giving, we hope you will consider a local donation to the Colonial Fund, which supports the very schools your children attend, or did, attend. All donations go towards funding innovative projects in our schools that would not otherwise be attainable.

As they did last year, Shrewsbury Federal Credit Union will match your donation, increasing the value of your gift and the amount of creative projects the Colonial Fund can support. SFCU has generously donated \$5,000 to the Colonial Fund and will match every dollar we raise



up to another \$5,000. We need your help to meet their challenge!

If you missed the opportunity to donate on #GivingTuesday, you can still help us reach our \$5000 goal by making your own donation at: <http://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/future/Donate-Now.cfm#donate>. All donations are tax deductible. We thank you for your support!

# Superintendent’s Awards



The school district has a tradition of recognizing high performing staff at the onset of each new school year. The Superintendent’s Awards are presented in recognition of extraordinary service to the Shrewsbury Public Schools, and were conferred to recipients at Opening Day for Staff on August 29, 2016. Pictured left to right are Heather Gablaski, Assistant

Principal, Sherwood Middle School (Thomas M. Kennedy Award); Lisa McCubrey, Principal, Floral Street School (Jayne M. Wilkin Award); Jeremy Mularella, Teacher, Oak Middle School; Charlene Campbell, Food Service Manager, Calvin Coolidge School; Dr. Joseph M. Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools; Donna Manzoli, Secretary, District; Kelli McSweeney, Special Education Teacher,

Shrewsbury High School; Marilyn Stewart, Literacy Tutor, Spring Street School; Daniel Shaughnessy, Special Education Teacher, Shrewsbury High School; Eric Bauer, Data Specialist, District.

“ Do not train a child to learn by force or harshness, but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each.”

~ Plato ~



# Global connections & digital learning conference

TARA GAUTHIER  
INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY  
SPECIALIST

On Wednesday, October 19th Shrewsbury High School's Student Innovation Team (SIT) had the opportunity to spend the day at MassCUE's Annual Fall Conference at Gillette Stadium. Before the event started, student participants Lauren Baldino, James Canzano, Chasia Molina, and Ajan Prabakar, under the supervision of Ms. Tara Gauthier, spent time looking at booths around the event in order to better comprehend what attendees were interested in. Afterwards, Ajan and Ms. Tara Gauthier presented the "Building a Work Environment for the Digital Age" workshop. The presentation placed a spotlight on the best applications in the task management, habit-building, calendar/scheduling categories as well as on the book, *The Power of Habit*, by Charles Duhigg. In the afternoon, the Student Innovation Team showcased their work concerning digital citizenship, proper electronics care, Independent Learning Endeavors, and the methodology of their student-run help desk. Each student's distinct experience on SIT brought exciting and fresh perspectives during their conversations with interested parents, teachers, administrators, and vendors.

After the presentation was completed, Ajan spent his time during the CUEKids showcase explaining the ticketing and workflow system for SIT. He went over the duties of every member of SIT and explained how each tech issue had a ticket attached and was assigned to a member of the team. He explained how tickets were resolved, common issues, and the communication involved. Ajan also showed the kinds of assignments students



Pictured above are Ms. Tara Gauthier and Ajan Prabakar discussing the *Fantastical App* with their workshop attendees.



Pictured above (left to right) James Canzano, Ajan Prabakar, Lauren Baldino and Chasia Molina talking to attendees at the MassCUE cueKIDS Showcase.

are expected to complete in order to get credit as well as the way they related to the core standards of SHS. Finally, he introduced the topics that his fellow CUEKid presenters would go over.

Senior Lauren Baldino had many opportunities throughout the day to promote the school's tech team summit and hackathon that will be taking place in April 2017. She spent most of the day reaching out to vendors to discuss the hackathon and summit, and looking for promotional materials and potential sponsorships. She got a lot of support and is excited to reach out to these vendors within the next few weeks. In addition, turning the student showcase, she talked to teachers, IT directors, and students about the upcoming hackathon. Many teachers were instantly hooked with the idea of a local high school hackathon. She hopes that her MassCUE experience will influence professionals to come on board with this great project.

During the cueKIDS showcase, James was heavily involved in Digital Citizenship and Digital Footprint. He talked about how both would impact everyday lives and why they were so important. When he was presenting to attendees he made sure to explain that our digital footprint is constantly growing because of our

constant connection with technology. He explained that if you are using social media responsibly, your risk of a bad digital footprint decreases.

James was able to explain that social media is a good tool for people because it's where everyone connects with each other. Finally he demonstrated that both Digital Citizenship and Digital Footprint is easily entrainable but also advised that one post could negatively impact the rest of your career.

Chasia talked to various attendees about the meaning of Digital Citizenship and Independent Learning Endeavors. She went on to show attendees how Shrewsbury High School is educating students to become knowledgeable about the digital world. She also discussed how students can improve their studying habits by taking advantage of their 1:1 initiative with the iPads. Chasia explained how all the different types of learners need a specific application to match up with their skills. For example, downloading an interactive flash card app called StudyBlue would help a visual learner to strengthen vocabulary for a particular subject.

## New staff

CONTINUED from page 6

Spring Street Elementary School:  
Allison Sullivan, *Second Grade*  
Master of Elementary Education, American International College  
Bachelor of Science in Business, Westfield State University

Parker Road/Wesleyan Terrace:  
Megan Braun, *Preschool*  
Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics and American Sign Language, University of Rochester

New Administrative Support Staff  
Elizabeth McCollum, *Executive Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent*

Lori Cyr, *Special Education Secretary, Shrewsbury High School*

New Paraprofessional Staff  
Shrewsbury High School:  
Evan Earls, *ABA Technician*  
Donika Garner, *Special Education Aide*  
Colleen Holmberg, *Special Education Aide*  
Kristian Jackson, *Special Education Aide*  
Melissa Sabo, *Special Education Aide*  
Manas Sarma, *Special Education Aide*  
Jean Smith, *Special Education Aide*

Oak Middle School:  
Paige Crane, *Instructional Aide*  
Johanna Evans, *Instructional Aide*  
Alyssa Graveson, *Special Education Aide*  
Michelle Hunt, *Child Specific Aide*  
Vanessa Maher, *Instructional Aide*

Sherwood Middle School:  
Alissa Chikeles, *ABA Technician*  
Jennifer Cotie, *Literacy Tutor*  
Josh Hinkson, *ABA Technician*  
Eric Laramée, *Child Specific Aide*  
Erin Marine, *Child Specific Aide*  
Luanne McGrath, *ABA Technician*  
Genevieve Steere, *Child Specific Aide*  
Bryana Sullivan, *ABA Technician*  
Joan Theodoss, *Special Education Aide*

Beal Early Childhood Center:  
Sara Cantor, *Child Specific Aide*  
Laura Henczel, *Literacy Tutor*  
Patricia Hollyer, *Instructional Aide*  
Amy Loconto, *Instructional Aide*  
Andrea Sevinsky, *Instructional Aide*  
Stephanie Toporowski, *Instructional Aide*

Coolidge Elementary School:  
Erin Brueggemann, *ABA Technician*  
Trendafile Ibrahim, *Child Specific Aide*  
Sarah Nguyen, *ABA Technician*  
Lisa Wawrzyeniak, *Speech Language Pathologist Assistant*

Floral Street Elementary School:  
Laura Merluzzo, *ABA Technician*

Paton Elementary School:  
Cynthia Belanger, *Child Specific Aide*  
Stephanie Curtis, *Instructional Aide*  
Kelly Delaney, *Child Specific Aide*  
Melissa Wass, *ABA Technician*


Spring Street Elementary School:  
Melissa Bentley, *Instructional Aide*  
Sharon Laramée, *Instructional Aide*  
Angela Welch, *Instructional Aide*

Parker Preschool:  
Anne Miller, *Instructional Aide*  
Sheila Parnell, *Child Specific Aide*




Pictured above is James Canzano talking about Digital Citizenship.





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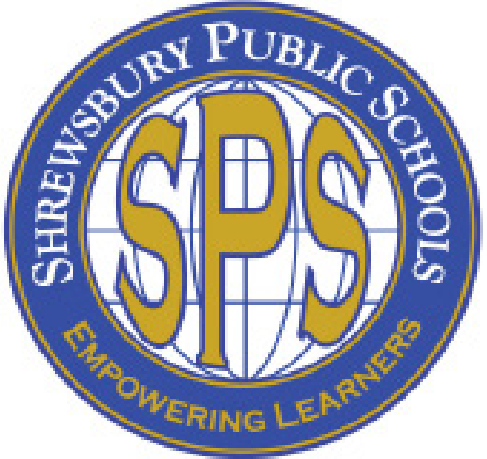


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Statement of Non-discrimination

Shrewsbury Public Schools is required by the Massachusetts Department of Education to publish an annual statement of non-discrimination. This notice serves to meet that requirement. The Massachusetts Equal Educational Opportunity statute, General Laws Chapter 76, § 5, ensures that all students have the right to equal educational opportunities in the public schools. The Shrewsbury Public School District is committed to ensuring equal educational opportunities for all students, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation or disability. The Shrewsbury Public Schools are in compliance with state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination and harassment. The following laws apply: Massachusetts General Law Chapter 76, § 5, which states, "No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in the admission to a public school or in obtaining the advantages, privileges, and course of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, gender identity or expression, or sexual orientation." Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 is a Federal statute which states, in part, "No person in the United States shall on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program receiving federal assistance." This requirement not to discriminate in educational programs and activities also extends to employment. Ms. Barb Malone, is the Title IX Coordinator, Director of Human Resources at (508) 841-8400. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, provides that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in be denied the benefits of or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Title VI provided for equal access and prohibits discrimination in the assignment of students to classes. It also prohibits discrimination in ability grouping or tracking students. The Shrewsbury School Committee's Policies #316 and #645 deal directly with the issues of harassment. Copies of these policies are available in the Principal's Office at each school or through the Superintendent's Office, located at 100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, MA 01545. Further information may be obtained by contacting Ms. Barb Malone, Director of Human Resources @ 508 841-8400. The following grievance procedure, which was approved by the Shrewsbury School Committee, is to be used for all issues relating to harassment or discrimination involving student and/or staff: 1. The Shrewsbury Public Schools does not and will not knowingly discriminate against any student or employee on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or disability. All reports of harassment or discrimination will be taken seriously and investigated in a timely fashion. Reports will be held in the utmost confidence. Any individual who believes he/she has been the subject of harassment or discrimination should immediately report the incident, either verbally or in writing to an administrator, adjustment counselor, guidance counselor, or teacher. The principal must be notified in all cases of harassment or discrimination. All cases of harassment involving a staff member will be reported to the Director of Human Resources. An administrator will first meet with the parties involved in an attempt to resolve the issue informally. If the complainant is unable to meet with the alleged harasser, the administrator, teacher, or counselor may assist the complainant in drafting a letter clearly describing the incident (behavior, where and when it occurred), how the complainant felt, and a request that the behavior stop immediately. Any letter should be signed by the complainant, sent to the alleged harasser and is kept on file by the school administrator. The alleged harasser may be encouraged to apologize, personally or by letter or to write a letter refuting the allegations. In cases of alleged harassment requiring formal investigations, the following shall be implemented. The complainant shall have the support of a staff

member of his/her choice and the alleged harasser will also have the opportunity to select representation (union representative, attorney, teacher, etc.). An administrator from the appropriate level will complete an investigation promptly and make a decision regarding the allegations. In serious cases, where alleged harassment does not stop following a warning, appropriate disciplinary sanction may be imposed, up to and including suspension or dismissal. If the conduct violates the law, the incident will be reported to the appropriate authorities by the school administration. Retaliation or threats of retaliation are unlawful and will not be tolerated. In all cases of harassment or discrimination, the investigating administrator will make a final disposition and issue a written report, which will be maintained in the school files. If the complainant cannot utilize the procedure detailed above because the alleged harasser is involved in the procedure, the complainant should contact the Superintendent of Schools. Complaints about the Superintendent of Schools should be made to the Chairperson of the School Committee. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal statute which states, in part, "No otherwise qualified individual, shall solely on the basis of handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." This requirement not to discriminate in educational programs and activities also extends to employment. Each school has a designated Section 504 Coordinator. Initial inquiries relating to Section 504 should be directed to the building-based Section 504 Coordinator who can be contacted through the principal's office. Further information may be requested by contacting Ms. Margaret Belsito, Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel, the district's Section 504 Coordinator at (508) 841-8400. The following grievance procedure should be used to report discrimination under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Acts of 1973: To fulfill its obligation under Section 504, the Shrewsbury Public Schools recognizes a responsibility to avoid discrimination in policies and practices regarding personnel and students. No discrimination against a person with a disability will knowingly be permitted in any of the programs or activities of the Shrewsbury Public Schools. The school district has a specific requirement under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which includes the responsibility to identify, evaluate and if the child is determined to be eligible under Section 504, to afford access to free and appropriate educational services. Questions about eligibility or services should be first directed to the building-based coordinator. If a parent or guardian disagrees with the determination made by the professional staff of the school, he/she has a right to a hearing, first with the district's Section 504 Coordinator, and secondly with an impartial hearing officer. The district's Section 504 Coordinator can be reached at 100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, MA 01545 or by phone at (508) 841-8400. The Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel, the district's Section 504 Coordinator, who will provide a written report of the district's findings, will hear all grievances in a timely manner. If a parent or guardian is unsatisfied with the results of the review, they may contact one of the agencies listed below. For grievances not resolved at the Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel level, a review by an impartial hearing officer may be scheduled. Individuals with grievances are not required to use the Shrewsbury Public School's grievance procedure. Written complaints may be filed with the following agencies: Massachusetts Department of Education, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148, (781) 338-3000; United States Department of Education Region 1 - Office of Civil Rights, 8th Floor, 5 Post Office Square, Boston, MA 02203 (800) 368-1019; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, John F. Kennedy Federal Building, 475 Government Center, Boston, MA 02203 (800) 669-4000; Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, One Ashburton Place, Room 601, Boston, MA 02108 (617) 994-6000.





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